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ABSTRACT

To better determine the educational and training needs of local employees, Lane Community College (LCC), in Oregon, undertook a project to analyze responses from a statewide survey of employers' perceptions of training needs and conduct focus groups with Lane County employees regarding their perceptions. The statewide study surveyed 6,010 businesses in the state, while LCC conducted focus groups with approximately 360 employees from 40 organizations. A comparison of findings from the two studies revealed the following: (1) the top four training priorities for employers were technical training, safety training, interpersonal communication, and basics skills training; (2) the top four training needs cited by employees were interpersonal and communication skills training, new employee orientation, technical training, and team building; (3) while employers and employees cited similar training priorities, employees mentioned training issues not covered by employers, including training for effective meetings, statistical control processes, and time management; and (4) the groups also differed with respect to quality-related training, with employers rating it highly and employees giving it the least priority. As a result of the project, a model was developed for accurately assessing regional training needs by gathering data from numerous sources on both employer and employee perceptions. Includes a six-item checklist for assessing training needs. Contains 19 references. (HAA)

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Regional Training Needs Assessment: Dual Perspectives Eliminate the Guessing Game

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August 3, 1996

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The Problem: Assessing Dual Perspectives

A state-wide survey of training needs entitled "*Oregon Works II*" outlines the training needs of employees from the employer's perspective. This survey is typical of studies that assess employee needs through employer perceptions as opposed to employee perceptions. Few studies capture the training and education needs of employees by asking employees themselves what they need. The Lane Community College (LCC) focus group study outlines the training needs of employees as perceived by employees. By excluding employees from the process, training and education programs offered by educational institutions are narrowly prescriptive and constrained as they are based only on the perceptions of employers.

More research is needed to determine employee training needs. Relying on employer-based training needs assessments makes it difficult to deliver training and education that accurately reflects employee needs. It further compromises an employee's motivation to commit and benefit from prescriptive training programs. If researchers continue to base training needs assessments solely on the perceptions of employers rather than on both employees and employers, education and training programs will remain inherently biased, possibly ineffective and of marginal relevance.

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the training and educational needs of Lane County employees. These employees have expressed their needs through 40 focus groups conducted by Lane Community College (LCC) in various organizations. Industry type and size varied among each of the 40 organizations. By comparing and

contrasting *Oregon Works II* with the employee- centered data, a more accurate picture of workforce training needs may be gained.

As a result of this research, a model is suggested for accurately assessing regional training and education needs as perceived by employers and employees. Using the needs assessment model presented in this study to assess regional training needs helps to neutralize conflicting goals. Employers bring their perceptions of organizational training goals into perspective. Employees confirm or clarify employer training perspectives to meet their needs. Employee involvement in the definition of their training needs will develop a sense of ownership and commitment necessary to ensure effective results. Without the employees perspective's on their training needs, training is done to the employees rather than done with them, in their best interest. Without the commitment from employers and employees to training needs, any training offered will be prescriptive. This model is an important contribution to research in the area of training and education, as limited research exists on the needs of employees as they perceive them. This paper will assist community college administrators to reevaluate their curriculum based on a model that accurately assesses training needs as perceived by both employers and employees.

By accurately assessing employee needs, education institutions can offer relevant training and education programs, employers will no longer have to prescribe training to their employees based on their own perceptions, and organizations can offer programs that are relevant to their employees.

The Need for Dual Training Perspectives

The role of workers within organizations and the workforce is changing. No longer do workers perform single, repetitive tasks. Twenty-first century workplaces require workers to be multi-skilled, multi-talented, contributing participants.

> In the future, whether singly or, more likely in teams, workers will be called upon to take more initiative, add value and contribute in previously untried ways, released from the constraints which applied before and empowered to take charge and better himself, at the same time contributing to corporate well-being and business success (Sibthrorpe, P. 46).

Training and education play a crucial role in increasing the quality and productivity of the current workforce. It is important to know the training needs of the current workforce if we are to sustain our economy and compete globally. "Of all the personnel and industrial relations functions, the training function alone has the function of being a change agent..." (Odiorne, p. 326). Identifying training needs creates the capacity for change.

To enable workers to become learning, contributing members of organizations, their training needs must be addressed.

> Holistic explanations treat workers as one class and the managers as another, and the differences are unexplainable in terms of class differences. The concepts of order-givers and order-taker, the blue bloods and the plebes, the aristocrats and the peasants, the elite and the masses, and the establishment and the mob would all be variations in a holistic theme in explaining differences.

> Such explanations, however useful they may be elsewhere, can only do us damage when we try to apply them to defining better ways of training and coaching managers as contrasted with coaching workers (Odiorne, p. 327).

Odiorne warns of the dangers of prescribing training to workers, based on management's perceptions about the training needs of their workforce. To transform workers into contributing organizational members, we must not prescribe, but rather, ask.

> People are different. One of the purposes of a good learning program is to bridge the differences between the person and the job so the individual can perform in a way that meets organizational goals. At the same time, the goals of the individual cannot be overlooked. When individual goals are in conflict with organizational goals, the training or education can be a waste of valuable resources (Nadler, p.82)

Not to waste valuable resources in the training needs assessment process, Stuart Dalziel (1991) suggests that:

> A more systematic process is needed which will enable the organization to determine and keep under review its priorities for training and enable quick reactions to problems and opportunities. It should include both formal and informal activities to encourage and assist managers and others to play their roles in providing a relevant learning environment (P. 183).

Training needs must be accurately identified if appropriate training and education programs are to be provided to the current workforce. "At its simplest, a training need exists when there is a gap between the present skills and knowledge of its employees, and the skills and knowledge they require or will require for an effective performance" (Odiorne, p. 184). The accurate identification of gaps in present skills

and knowledge of employees themselves helps to ensure the delivery of appropriate and relevant training.

> Nowadays a training need identification needs to do more than describe and justify (in terms of costs and benefits) what has to be learnt. It should also identify, and make some assessment of wider factors, so that relevant and effective learning arrangements may be made (Dalziel, P. 185).

Wider factors, such as the training needs of workers themselves add to the justification for training. If it is workers that will be receiving the training, then workers themselves must have input into the process of identifying and interpreting their needs.

The Lane Community College focus group study offers ***employee perspectives*** on their own training needs. *Oregon Works II* is a state-wide survey that offers data on ***employer perceptions*** about employee training needs. State policy-makers transformed the data from *Oregon Works I* and *II* into a series of cost benefit analyses to justify the need for training. Both perspectives are required to assess regional training needs and deliver trainings that meet the needs.

This study offers a model to assess regional training needs by comparing two training needs assessments that focus on the perspectives of both the employers and employees. This model will enable educators and managers to assess training needs by finding a common perspective. By assessing regional needs, community college administrators may align their curricular offerings to meet regional training and education needs.

Two Data Sets: Employer & Employee Perspectives

This study is qualitative in nature. It involves data from two separate studies; *Oregon Works II* and; the LCC focus group study. The methodology used for each study is outlined in this section.

Employer Perspectives: Oregon Works II

Our knowledge of the training needs of workers is limited to data obtained from employers and managers about worker needs. To assess training needs, researchers have typically surveyed or interviewed employers and managers of organizations.

At the state level, the Economic Development Department commissioned surveys of Oregon employers entitled *Oregon Works I* (1993) and *Oregon Works II* (1994). The purpose of the surveys were, "to learn more about the opinions of employers, workforce policies and management practices through state-wide, random sample of employers" (*Oregon Works II*, p. iii). The study took the following approach:

> "Two focus groups of randomly selected employers were utilized to pretest the questionnaire, following which revisions in format and wording were made....Fielding the survey consisted of a three stage process. Initially surveys were mailed to 6010 firms throughout the state using generic titles for each employer depending on size of company: Owner/partner; president or chief executive officer (p.3-4).

This survey gathered data on the opinions and practices of employers on training, but it did not assess the training needs of workers directly.

Employee Perspectives: LCC Focus Group Study

Oregon Works II collected data on employer perspectives. The LCC focus group study gathered data from employee perspectives. This avoids a common mistake cited by Leach: "Depending totally upon staff intuitions or current training literature to define needs, without ever consulting the line organization for their perceptions" (p.66). While staff intuitions provide insight into training needs, these factors do not take into account the individuality of workers and organizations. Focus groups delve into employee perceptions by asking workers themselves about their own training needs.

> Substantively, the strength of focus groups comes from the opportunity to collect data from group interaction...When all goes well, focusing the group discussion on a single topic brings forth material that would not come out of either the participants' own casual conversations or in response to the researcher's preconceived questions (Morgan, p. 21).

Through focus groups, approximately 360 employees from 40 organizations ranging in industry type throughout Lane County have been interviewed. Focus groups offer an efficient way to gather in-depth information from multiple workers. Allison Rossett concurs with Morgan, stating that "The needs assessment process can increase the likelihood of coordination and acceptance" (p. 37). Additionally, focus groups provide a forum for workers to discuss and explore their training needs while building consensus. "Employees are in the best position to identify their own problems and for

contributing to the development of the means for their solution" (Stanley, p. 57). The focus group setting offers employees the opportunity to discuss their collective needs, confidentially, without fear of repercussion.

Focus group discussions have multiple benefits. By identifying the knowledge and skills they need to help the organization achieve its ideal status, employees recognized their training needs and requested training. Employee recognition of their own learning gaps is an important step in committing to training and education.

> ...another method of achieving both recognition and acceptance of learning gaps is to involve people in a review of current work practices where identifying training needs is a 'hidden agenda' item...This can be particularly effective when the individuals concerned are critical of the present arrangements and feel that their opinions will be taken seriously by management. "The process of reviewing critically the current arrangements [can] lead to their [the worker] requesting training and to the introduction of a more efficient system" (Dalziel, p. 188).

Employees, through focus groups, further identify and commit themselves to their training needs while contributing to the needs of the organization.

> "Acceptance by individuals that they have a learning gap which cannot be filed by informal learning is an important first step in securing a positive attitude of mind towards taking part in training aimed at remedying the need" (Dalziel, p.188).

- Approaches to assessing needs

Many approaches have been offered to accurately assess training needs. Geary Rummler (1987) outlines 4 common approaches to determining training needs:

1. Performance analysis...
2. Task analysis...
3. Competency Study...
4. Training needs study....(p.226)

These four approaches are geared at assessing the knowledge and skills of an employee in competently performing specific tasks.

The dominant method used to determine needs is the competency study. Assessing the training needs of a cross-section of the current workforce is complex. Each organization has its own culture and issues. The advantages of the competency study outlined by Rummler are:

- It is relatively fast
- It requires broad involvement
- It incorporates consensus
- Participants articulate and agree upon a success profile for performance in the organization
- Generic training needs covering a broad population are identified

Competency studies were conducted with 40 randomly selected organizations, varying in industry type, throughout Lane County. Before utilizing competency studies within each organization, preliminary interviews with management were conducted to identify possible training needs throughout the organization.

> ...training needs must apply to individuals, at whatever level in the organization, but the scope and grouping of application will vary considerably...First, some training needs may cover everyone in the organization...The second category, less wide in scope, relates to specific

groups of people within an organization. ..The third category relates to particular individuals (Dalziel, p. 185).

After identifying a wide scope of training issues for the organization, focus groups were conducted with specific, targeted groups of people in each organization to clarify and add to management perceptions about organizational training needs.

Employees were offered the opportunity to participate in a focus group. Each focus group consisted of no more than 12 participants to encourage even participation. Prior to the focus groups, participants were informed of the purpose of the focus groups -- to determine their training needs. They were then asked to think about the knowledge and skills necessary to do their jobs. This served as their only preparation prior to the focus group session.

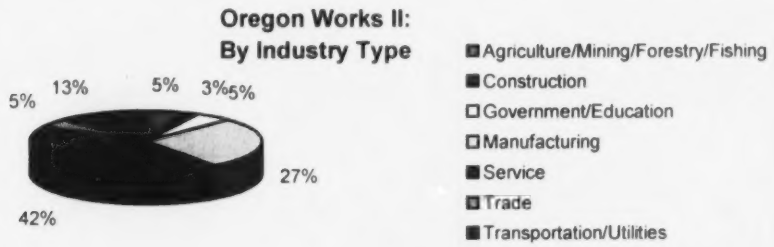
Focus groups followed an interview schedule (Attached). Upon entering the focus groups, workers engaged in a critical discussion on the culture of their organization. From this discussion, a perceived and ideal culture for the organization was identified by the employees. Employees then identified the competencies they need, in terms of knowledge and skills, to move the organization towards its ideal status. The knowledge and skills were then prioritized and summarized as recommended training agendas.

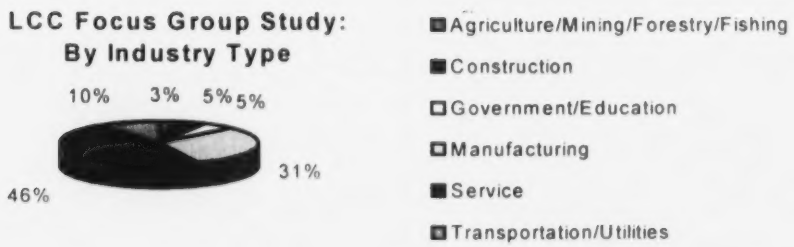
Management did not participate in the focus groups in order to ensure employee confidentiality. Job security is a major issue for front-line workers exposing their own deficiencies. To ensure job security, focus groups must be kept confidential and were therefore not taped. The mere presence of a tape-recorder would inhibit employees from discussing sensitive issues that relate to training needs. Instead, extensive notes were taken throughout each focus group discussion.

Data was analyzed and organized by similar themes and categories. The importance of each theme was weighted by the frequency with which it occurred. A pattern-matching, explanation building procedure of analysis was used. This method is commonly used in a hypothesis generating process where the goal is not to conclude a study but to develop ideas for further study (Yin, p. 110).

Meshing Employer & Employee Perspectives

The data sources from *Oregon Works II* and the LCC focus group study are strikingly similar. Divided by industry type, the LCC focus group data is a microcosm of the population surveyed for *Oregon Works II*. In both data sets, the largest industry sectors surveyed and interviewed were the service and manufacturing sectors.





Oregon Works II surveyed 6,010 employers in a range of industries throughout the state of Oregon. LCC held focus groups in 40 organizations in a similar range of industries throughout Lane County. Both *Oregon Works II* and the LCC focus group study pose questions to gauge employee training needs within organizations.

1. Employer Perspectives: Oregon Works II

Two questions from Oregon Works II specifically attempt to gather information on employer perceptions about the training needs of their employees. The first question asks employers to rank and prioritize employee training priorities. Their prioritization's and rankings were restricted to a predetermined set of training categories; basic skills; technical skills; interpersonal skills; product/sales; and safety. There were no allowances for training priorities outside of the predetermined categories. The report summary explicitly states that this question was misinterpreted by survey respondents and thus yielded inconclusive data. Noting the inconclusive results, the report does attempt to analyze responses, offering a prioritized list of employer training priorities:

1. Technical training
2. Safety training
3. Interpersonal communication
4. Basic skills

A second question in Oregon Works II asks employers to rate the proficiencies of employees in a number of predetermined training categories; work ethic; basic skills; knowledge of your product services; interpersonal, social and communication skills; and employee commitment to quality. The employer responses are prioritized to reveal their perceptions about their employees least proficient, or deficient, skill areas. Employers perceived employee areas of least proficiency to be:

1. Interpersonal, social, and communication skills
2. Technical Skills
3. Commitment to Quality

Coupling the first question on employee training needs with this question ranking employee proficiencies reveals an image of employer perceptions of employee training needs.

1. Interpersonal, social and communication skills
2. Technical skills

2. Employee Perceptions: The LCC Focus Group Study

The employee focus group data offers a prioritized list of employee training needs of employees as perceived by employees. At each of the 40 organizations where focus groups were held, employees prioritized their own training needs. Using frequency counts and pattern matching techniques, employee training priorities were revealed for the region's workforce based on employee perceptions. The LCC focus group data prioritizes employee perceptions about their own training needs. These training priorities were generated by employees. Their training priorities are a result of open ended questions about the knowledge and skills they need to best do their jobs. Their responses were not restricted to predetermined categories or responses. All responses were valued and encouraged. Their top 5 training priorities are:

1. Interpersonal & communication skills training
2. New employee orientation
3. Technical training (specific to their field)
4. Team building
5. Cross training/job shadowing within the organization

Employee responses generated additional training issues and ideas that are depicted in table 1. While these responses were not a high priority to employees, they do offer a more comprehensive look at employee training issues.

A detailed list of employer and employee perceptions on training needs are summarized in Table 1.

3. Summary of the Dual Perspectives

Table 1 Perceived Training Needs: Employer & Employees

Employer Perspective On Employee Needs Oregon WorksII	*Employee Perspectives On Their Own Needs Lane Community College Focus Groups*
• ***Future training priorities***	• ***Current & future training priorities (prioritized through frequency counts)***
1. Technical training 2. Safety training 3. Interpersonal communication 4. Basic skills training	1. Interpersonal & communication skills training 2. New employee orientation 3. Technical training (specific to their field) 4. Team building 5. Cross training/job shadowing within the organization 6. Develop company training plans 7. Basic skills training 8. Create procedure manuals & policy guidelines 9. Customer service 10. Create internal training programs using existing staff expertise 11. Train the trainer 12. Change the physical work space for efficiency and communication 13. Quality assurance training
• ***Least proficient skill area of employees (Deficiencies)***	• ***Additional training issues & ideas noted:***
1. Interpersonal, social, and communication skills 2. Technical skills 3. Commitment to quality	Meeting effectiveness Statistical process control Time management compliance with government regulations Front-line leadership Report Writing Sales Marketing

	Hiring practices Principles of business ownership

Summary of Perspectives:

4. Dissimilarity among Dual Perceptions

Dissimilarity does exist among the employer and employee perspectives. This section summarizes the main areas of dissimilarity between the two data sets.

- Rank order of first and third items

  Employers and employees do have similar training priorities. The employer responses to training priorities were locked into predetermined categorical answers while employee responses were not limited in any way. As illustrated in Table 1 employer and employee perceptions about training priorities are reversed. Employers ranked technical training as their top training issue with employees. Employees ranked interpersonal communication as their top training priority. Employer and employee prioritization of these two issues are directly reversed.

  The employer prioritization of training needs revealed inconclusive data. This might explain the reversal of priorities. If employers are unaware of employee training issues, technical training might be their first concrete, obvious answer. Technical skills often translate to a potential liability or government requirement for employers. Reducing liability and fulfilling government requirements are likely to be major concerns for employers. If employers perceive a training need for employees, technical skills are easier to pinpoint than the more nebulous skills of interpersonal communication. When employers were asked about the least proficient (deficient) areas of their employees, interpersonal communication skills rated high, suggesting similar training interests for employers and employees.

- No commonality among the perspectives

Employer training priority # 2, safety training, does not appear on the employee prioritized training list. It is simply not an expressed priority for employees. Their issues tend to be centered around processes and skills directly related to their jobs. While safety may be pertinent to their jobs, employees did not express it as a priority.

- Additional employee needs not perceived by employers: New perspectives for employers

Employees identified additional training related issues through focus groups that were not recognized by employers in *Oregon Works II* surveys:

- Meeting effectiveness
- Statistical process control
- Time management
- compliance with government regulations
- Front-line leadership
- Report writing
- Sales
- Marketing
- Hiring practices
- Principles of business ownership

Oregon Works II data revealed only a few issues:

- Technical training
- Safety
- Interpersonal communication
- Basic skills

- Commitment to quality

The additional issues identified in the LCC focus group study represent training or procedure related information. They offer a closer look at needs that, if addressed, could increase employee work effectiveness and productivity. These additional needs were expressed within at least one of the 40 organizations where focus groups were held.

Table 2 Employer & Employee Perspectives Compared

Training Issue	*Employer*	*Employee*
• Interpersonal & communication skills		
• New employee orientation		
• Technical training		
• Team building		
• Cross Training /Job shadowing		
• Develop organizational training plan		
• Basic skills		
• Create organizational procedure manuals and policy guidelines		
• Customer service		
• Create internal training programs		
• Change the physical work space		
• Quality assurance		

5. Commonalties among perspectives

- Interpersonal, social, and communication skills

Employees ranked interpersonal, and communication skills as their top training need. Both employers and employees agree that interpersonal, social, and communication skills are of priority, although they ranked them differently. The employer rankings represent a lack of knowledge about employee training needs. When asked to rank their perceptions about employee training needs, employers may be more likely to

focus on the hard skills associated with technical training rather than the softer, more nebulous skills associated with interpersonal, social, and communication skills.

- Quality related training

Employers perceive that their employees need to be more proficient in their commitment to quality. Employees prioritized training on quality assurance last (#13), indicating that they would like to gain an understanding of quality assurance principles and practices. This may reflect a difference in levels of understanding of quality principles. Employers appear to understand the principles of quality, demanding greater employee commitment to quality. Employees would like to gain a basic understanding of quality principles so that they can apply them to their work.

- Basic skills training

Basic skills define a basic level of literacy and arithmetic necessary to function in the work environment. Employer responses in *Oregon Works II* were forced into predetermined categories, one of which was basic skills. The LCC focus group study did not force responses into categories. This may explain the difference in prioritization. Given more options, employers may not have ranked basic skills so highly. An alternative explanation may be the large survey sample of *Oregon Works II*. With a greater number of survey respondents throughout the state of Oregon, the issue of basic skills may have arisen more frequently.

6. Regional Training Priorities Identified

Employee training needs often reinforced or clarified employer training perceptions when comparing *Oregon Works II* with the LCC focus group study. Analyzing the two data sets revealed more similarity than dissimilarity. Although prioritized

differently, similar training and education issues arose for employers and employees. Comparing *Oregon Works II* with the LCC focus group study triangulates data by using interviews, focus groups, and surveys to provides a more complete description of regional perceptions regarding training issues. *Oregon Works II* provides an initial identification of employee training needs based on the perceptions of employers. The LCC focus group study confirms, refutes, and further clarifies the findings of *Oregon Works II*. From the similarities among employer and employee perspectives, regional training priorities for Lane County can been verified by employees as:

Employer Perspectives	*Overlapping Perspectives*	*Employee Perspectives*
	Lane County Regional Training Needs	
Safety	***Interpersonal & communication skills***	New employee orientation
	Technical training	Team building
	Basic skill needs	Cross training/job shadowing within the organization
	Quality training	Develop company training plans Create procedure manuals & policy guidelines Customer service Create internal training programs using existing staff expertise Train the trainer Change the physical work space for efficiency

From the dissimilarities, additional questions are raised, suggesting a need for follow up questions with employers to explore and verify the employee training needs that

fell outside of the predetermined training categories of *Oregon Works II*. Additionally, dissimilarities in perceptions offer further ideas for study.

Meshing the Perspectives with Education

Meshing perspectives on training needs involves taking into account the goals of both employers and employees as facilitators of change.

> A needs analysis has implications for the organization's power structure and for the persons who control the real and symbolic resources within the organization. One key aspect of organizational politics that affects the needs assessment is conflicting goals (Sleezer, p. 256)

Conflicting training goals may result, due to differing perceptions of need, in the delivery of training that is irrelevant to the organization. Using the needs assessment model presented in this study to assess regional training needs helps to neutralize conflicting goals. Employers bring their perceptions of organizational training goals into perspective. Employees confirm or clarify employer training perspectives to meet their needs. Employee involvement in the definition of their training needs will develop a sense of ownership and commitment necessary to ensure effective results. Without the employees perspective's on their training needs, training is done to the employees rather than done with them, in their best interest. Without the commitment from employers and employees to training needs, any training offered will be prescriptive. Employer and employee perspectives combined have the power to create change.

Understanding training needs in multiple organizations provides educators with insight into regional training and education needs. Community colleges offering continuing education programs to their regional business communities can replicate

the training needs assessment model used in this research by considering the following:

Replicating the Training Needs Assessment Model

- Gather training needs assessment data from a variety of sources.

By triangulating data through surveys, focus groups, and interviews from both the perspective of employers and employees, an accurate picture of community training needs can be gained. Relying solely on data that draws from only one perspective is limiting for either both the employer and employees. Careful consideration of both perspectives is necessary.

If data on regional training needs is unavailable in your community, there may be an opportunity to design a regional training needs assessment. This assessment may offer a snapshot of regional needs and will need to involve the following components:

Training Needs Assessment Checklist

1. *Design your study to be representative of the larger business and industry community. Oregon Works II* and the LCC focus group study exemplify the need to gather a representative sample from the range of industry types that exist in your community. It may not be necessary or plausible to assess training needs of thousands of organizations and employers. Selecting organizations that represent the greater population in a given region can provide accurate data.

2. *Cross reference your study and data to any state and local policy directives surrounding training.* Many states, such as Oregon, have examined training issues to develop policy directives. In Oregon, the state Benchmarks provide a policy directive for the development of training and education programs. Becoming familiar with policy directives and state training data will complement your study and help to facilitate a strategic planning process.
3. *Include the perspectives of both employers and employees.* Both employer and employee perspectives may be identified through use of quantitative and/or qualitative methods. By comparing and contrasting *Oregon Works II* with the LCC focus group data, training needs were analyzed through use of surveys and focus groups that asked similar questions in different ways. By asking similar questions in different ways, the accuracy of responses could be confirmed.
4. *Analyze both perspectives.* As this research demonstrates, employer and employee perspectives are necessary to gain an accurate picture of regional training needs. *Oregon Works II* provided initial data on training needs from the employers perspective. The LCC focus group study clarified and confirmed the findings of *Oregon Works II* by exploring training needs from the employee perspective.
5. *Compare your training needs assessment responses to current curriculum offerings.* Aligning your curriculum with regional training needs helps to ensure successful programs and an educated, high-skilled, competitive workforce. If educational institutions do not align their curricular offerings with regional training needs, program offerings will be prescriptive, based solely on the perceptions of educational institutions. Program planning based on prescription is a guessing game.

6. *Consider the need for further questioning.* Depending on you research methods and results, follow-up questions may be necessary for clarification. A mechanism for tracking respondents and contact persons is needed to allow for follow up questions. Few studies produce wholly conclusive data, and the ability to clarify responses helps to insure accurate, reflective data.

- Assess regional needs frequently

Training needs will evolve and change as local and national workforce demographics shift, technology advances, and global competition increases. Training needs of today may be obsolete by tomorrow. For educators to continuously offer relevant training and education programs, ongoing assessments of regional training needs are necessary. Consider demographic changes in your region, and plan for ongoing assessments.

More research is needed on regional training needs assessments that takes into account dual perspectives of employers and employees. Without the perspectives of both employers or employees, training and education programs are prescriptive, based on the isolated needs of employers, employees, or educational institutions. Training and education programs based on the needs of one perspective are biased and of marginal quality. A regional perspective on training needs will ensure that training and education programs meet the needs of the local workforce and the community.

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